

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEA-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 ACDA-12 IO-13 EB-08 NRC-05 OES-07 SOE-02
CEQ-01 /124 W

-----128359 021055Z /14

R 020917Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6213
INFO USDOEHQ WASHDC
USDOEHQ GERMANTOWN

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 04058

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ENRG, MNUC, TECH, AU
SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN REACTION TO NUCLEAR TALKS IN WASHINGTON

1. SPO PARLIAMENTARY LEADER FISCHER TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER APRIL 26, THAT THE AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENT WAS IN A "VERY DIFFICULT SITUATION" IN THE ABSENCE OF U.S. DECISIONS ABOUT REPROCESSING AUSTRIA'S U.S.-SUPPLIED SPENT NUCLEAR FUEL AND ABOUT U.S. STORAGE OF AUSTRIAN NUCLEAR WASTE. FISCHER, WHO, HE SAID, WAS PRESENT AT FOREIGN TRADE MINISTER STARIBACHER'S BRIEFING OF CHANCELLOR KREISKY AND OTHER GOVERNMENT AND PARTY LEADERS ON THE RECENT U.S.-AUSTRIAN TALKS, SAID THE MINISTER DESCRIBED THE NEGOTIATIONS AS "DISTURBING" AND "OF SERIOUS CONCERN" SINCE THEY GIVE GOA NO BASIS FOR DECIDING WHAT TO DO NEXT.

2. FISCHER ALSO SAID AUSTRIA PROBABLY WOULD DROP CONSIDERATION OF IRAN AS A STORAGE PLACE FOR NUCLEAR WASTE AND NOTED THAT THE U.S. WAS OPPOSED TO INTRODUCING THE ISSUE OF NUCLEAR WASTE STORAGE INTO THE MIDDLE EAST CONTROVERSY BY "ALLOWING" AUSTRIA TO GO AHEAD ON
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ARRANGEMENTS WITH EGYPT. THESE CONSIDERATIONS, ALONG WITH U.S. INABILITY TO GIVE ASSURANCES AS TO WHEN THE ADMINISTRATION MIGHT ACT ON AUSTRIAN REQUESTS AND AS TO CONGRESSIONAL REACTION, HAVE INTENSIFIED THE AUSTRIAN DILEMMA. WITH IMPORTANT ELECTIONS SCHEDULED IN VIENNA FOR THE FALL, THE SPO, ACCORDING TO FISCHER, FEELS IT CANNOT ALLOW THE ISSUE TO DRAG ON INDEFINITELY, NOT LEAST

BECAUSE OPPONENTS OF NUCLEAR POWER CAN ONLY BE ENCOURAGED TO FURTHER POLITICIZE THE ISSUE IN THE ABSENCE OF A DECISION.

3. FISCHER CLOSED WITH THE COMMENT THAT CHANCELLOR KREISKY, WHILE IN THE U.S. MAY 30-JUNE 2 FOR THE UN SPECIAL SESSION ON DISARMAMENT, WILL MAKE THIS THE NUMBER ONE ISSUE FOR BI-LATERAL DISCUSSIONS WITH SENIOR USG OFFICIALS. THE AUSTRIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON IS NOW IN THE PROCESS OF ATTEMPTING TO ARRANGE SUCH MEETINGS.

4. COMMENT: FISCHER'S PRESENTATION TO US IS THE FIRST AUSTRIAN REACTION TO THE RECENT NUCLEAR TALKS IN WASHINGTON THAT WE HAVE RECEIVED. HIS COMMENTS SUGGEST THAT THE AUSTRIANS WILL CONTINUE TO PRESS THE U.S. TO COME UP WITH SOME DECISION ON THE ISSUES OF REPROCESSING AND STORAGE. IMPLICIT IN THE FISCHER REMARKS WAS THE SUGGESTION THAT AUSTRIA MIGHT HAVE TO RECONSIDER ITS NUCLEAR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S., BUT HE OFFERED NO SPECIFICS. WE HAVE HEARD SIMILAR HINTS BEFORE, BUT IT REMAINS DIFFICULT TO CONCEIVE OF REALISTIC ALTERNATIVES OPEN TO THE GOA AT THIS JUNCTURE. BORG

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SUPPLIES, STORAGE, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, MEETINGS, NUCLEAR FUELS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978VIENNA04058
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780186-0693
Format: TEL
From: VIENNA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197805100/aaaadhv.tel
Line Count: 85
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 7a2f4693-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2510920
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AUSTRIAN REACTION TO NUCLEAR TALKS IN WASHINGTON
TAGS: ENRG, MNUC, TECH, AU, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/7a2f4693-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014